

The NAMI Washington Alliance is here for you during COVID-19

Dear NAMI Washington Community,

We at NAMI Washington hope you are doing well, and taking care of yourself. This is a strange time for our country and state, to say the least. We have been inundated with information about the physical manifestations of COVID-19, and have been asked to take steps to limit the spread of the virus. There has been little information about the mental health impact of the pandemic.

First and foremost, remember NAMI is here for you. The Affiliates of the NAMI Washington Alliance are continuing to provide no-cost NAMI support group and education programs either in person, where allowable, and many via video or teleconference where in-person events have become a challenge. The NAMI HelpLine is adapting to ensure that our vital services are available to those in need regardless of COVID-19 implications, and the NAMI national, state, and local websites and social channels provide information and inspiration at any time. You can encourage members of your community to contact local or national NAMI at www.nami.org, info@nami.org or 800-950-NAMI (6264) for information, support or referral to nearby NAMI Affiliates and other services, and/or visit us on a social channel -- FB: @NAMI, T/IG: @NAMICommunicate, or via one of our story sharing platforms, [YouAreNotAlone](#) or [OK2Talk](#). A list of Washington State Affiliates can be found at www.namiwa.org. There is also a dedicated [Mental Health & Coping During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) on the CDC website.

As COVID-19 concerns are impacting our workplaces as well as our lives at home and with our family and friends, we recognize that out of an abundance of caution, many of us are working from home and imposing self-quarantine. We at NAMI encourage understanding and recognition of potential consequences for those who may have mental health vulnerabilities.

Uncertainty and the potential impact of isolation may be particularly challenging, not to mention, the simply heightened anxiety this new situation has produced for many of us. What we know is that informal and formal, both direct and gentle communication can be beneficial, and communication transparency and frequency may help mitigate worry and assist in establishing comfort.

Tips and tactics for taking care of your Mental Health in Life and Work

Here we offer a few additional tips and suggestions for you to consider when evaluating and crafting your own contingency plans for working at home, caring for your family, and taking care of your mental health in whatever situation you find yourself.

- To help overcome uncertainty, normality and routine that mirrors the office life's daily patterns and practices can be helpful. If you are working remotely, we encourage you to create a structured, dedicated work environment and build in self-care as well as daily benchmarks of achievement.
- Structure and routine may be helpful for people with mental health vulnerabilities, especially during times of uncertainty. Encourage each other to maintain a regular routine with the work hours that are usually worked, including keeping up with morning rituals. Dressing in regular work attire and taking regular breaks, including lunch time, may also be helpful.

- Research highlights the benefits of exercise to improving mental, physical and cognitive health. Scheduling some physical activity into your day will benefit your work from home experience.
- Encourage each other to be mindful about working too little or too much. Resisting the temptations of household chores, binge news watching or entertainment as well as the urge to work late into the night can be helpful.
- Promote easy access to one another. Share your cell phone numbers with one another, transfer your work phone to your cell and keep the status bar of your availability updated.
- Research tells us that 7% of communication is accomplished through our words, including email. 38% is voice and a staggering 55% is body language and visual cu. For people with mental health vulnerabilities, and even for those with extroverted personalities, the lack of face time can be challenging. Using technology to simulate this can offer a solution to bridging this gap. The NAMI Washington Alliance has access to the ZOOM Video Conferencing Platform, and may hold meetings, classes, support groups, and other events via this platform.
- Taking steps to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of social isolation can be a proactive approach to promoting self-care. This may be especially important for those who live alone. Encourage people to schedule short “water cooler” video calls with their friends, family and colleagues, including checking in on one another as they would in the office. Use technology for informal texting when appropriate as an additional strategy. If you are a manager, keep, or if you don’t have, set, regular check-in times with your team, collectively, to reinforce the benefits of team, in this case the new virtual team.
- Take Care of Yourself. Many people with mental health conditions, and other health conditions, rely on medications as a key component to treatment and health management. Concerns about adequate supply or ability to obtain refills can be addressed. Check with your insurance carrier about the possibility of getting a one-time extra prescription refill to have on hand just in case this vital supply chain is interrupted.

Additional, creative suggestions to promote connectivity

Some companies appreciate ideas on creative ways to send support and stay connected to employees. These are businesses that are also NAMI partners, supporting our movement.

- Things are chaotic in communities right now, and flow and typical schedules are disrupted. Consider sending your team something fun, like [slime](#), as a stress reliever and something fun to set a positive tone.
- While everyone is working remotely, think about doing a “best home office” photo contest, or favorite home office pet content. Do a prize like a [weighted blanket](#), or a [gift card](#).
- Consider sending a [box](#) to team leads who are going above and beyond during the time of flux and disruption.

Suggested news articles to explore further

VICE (3.5.20) – [How to Deal With Coronavirus If You Have OCD or Anxiety](#)

Rolling Stone (3.4.20) – [Coronavirus Is Wreaking Havoc On Our Mental Health](#)

Today (3.3.20) – [How to survive coronavirus anxiety: 8 tips from mental health experts](#)

CBS This Morning, via YouTube (3.10.20)—[How to manage anxiety over Coronavirus](#)

CNBC (3.10.20)—[WHO gives advice on handling mental health toll from the Coronavirus](#)

NYTimes (3.5.20) - [How to work from home with children](#)

Unicef (3.11.20) - [How to talk to your child about COVID-19](#)

Please take the best care of yourselves possible during these strange and unusual times! And remember, NAMI is here for you.

In peace,

Lauren B. Simonds, M.S.W.

Executive Director/CEO

And Barbara A. Miller, M.S.W.
President